FAX/STD/ISD facilities in Village Panchayats

3579. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated a policy to cover all the Gram Panchayats of the country with public phone facilities including FAX/STD/ISD etc.;

(b) if so, the details thereof and by when, the above facilities would be provided; and

(c) the effective measures being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) to (c) Sir, Government has a policy to cover all the villages of the country including Gram Panchayats with public facility by December, 2003. However, the villages and Gram Panchayats which are to be provided *via* satellite are planned to be covered within one year from the date of availability of funds. Private Basic Service operators have, not fulfilled their obligation in the States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Punjab. Government is pursuing with the operators for fulfilment of the obligation.

Commission on STD/PCO booth

3580. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether PCO/STD booth operators have been pleading for rise in commission commensurate with the increase in the volume of telecom traffic;

(b) whether most of the PCO/STD booth holders are from poor st* Ja and are economically vulnerable; and

(c) if so, whether Government would consider to review the commission slabs for revenue generated from their landline connections serving the poor?